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021154Z Feb 06

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TEL AVIV 000486

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Leading media cited an interview President Bush granted Reuters aboard Air Force One en route to Nashville, in which he vowed that the U.S. will rise to Israel's defense if needed against Iran, and denounced Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for "menacing talk" against Israel. Bush was quoted as saying: "Israel is a solid ally of the U.S.; we will rise to Israel's defense if needed." Asked if he meant he meant the U.S. would rise to Israel's defense militarily, Bush said: "You bet, we'll defend Israel." Israel Radio and Ha'aretz's web site reported that Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Danny Ayalon, praised Bush's statement, saying that it "proves yet again that the U.S. is a true friend and ally. We are proud and appreciate the special relations between the two countries." The media also quoted President Bush as saying: "In order for the U.S. to support a Palestinian government run by Hamas, Hamas must change its party platform and change its way of thinking and get rid of this armed group, as well as change its attitude toward Israel." All media reported that Hamas dismissed the President's call.

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that in the State of the Union Address speech he delivered on Tuesday, President Bush called for a reduction in the United States' dependence on Middle Eastern oil, defended his democratization policy in Iraq and the PA, and extended his hand in peace to the Iranian people.

All media bannered Wednesday's clashes between police and right-wing activists at the illegal settler outpost of Amona. All nine houses, the destruction of which was ordered by the High Court of Justice, were razed at the end of the operation. More than 200 people were injured on both sides. The media reported that a 15-year-old boy is in serious condition. Ha'aretz quoted Acting PM Ehud Olmert as saying Wednesday evening that violent protesters in Amona crossed a line and that "this cannot be accepted" and that the violent confrontation was planned and organized by the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories in an attempt to achieve political goals. Interviewed in various media, leading right-wing politicians and settlers said that Acting PM Ehud Olmert and his party Kadima were "putting on a show" ahead of the March 28 elections. Israel Radio reported that senior Labor Party MK Prof. Yuli Tami wants an investigation into the Amona violence. Major media reported that right-wing activists and journalists blasted the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories for being too moderate. Ha'aretz quoted security sources as saying Wednesday night that despite the day's violence, one or two additional outposts are liable to be evacuated before the elections. Ha'aretz wrote that several farms in the Nablus area that are slated

for demolition are on the agenda.

Leading media quoted Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu el-Gheit as saying Wednesday after meeting with his Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni in Cairo that the Palestinians must stop all violence as a precondition for renewing peace talks with Israel. Ha'aretz noted that this is the first time that Egypt has made such a demand. Livni also met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Yediot noted that the Egyptian media lavished words of praise on Livni -- the "iron and silk lady" according to Egyptian weekly Al-Mussawar. Major media quoted Egyptian intelligence chief and number two in the Egyptian government, Omar Suleiman, as saying Wednesday that Hamas, whom The Jerusalem Post wrote he characterized as "very radical people," must promise to end its violent tactics, recognize Israel, and honor previous diplomatic agreements made by the Palestinian Authority. Suleiman was quoted as saying that if Hamas failed to do them, it will not be able to form the next Palestinian government. Maariv observed that this was the first time since the beginning of the Intifada that Egypt has shown such an attitude toward Hamas.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, former PA security chief Muhammad Dahlan warned Hamas against trying to take control of the PA security forces, saying that the new cabinet would be subordinate to PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO.

Israel Radio reported that three Qassam rockets were fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip last night and this morning. The station reported that this morning at a checkpoint, a female soldier arrested two Palestinian youths carrying pipe bombs.

Israel Radio reported that U.S. Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones met with Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman on Wednesday.

The Jerusalem Post reported on a petition filed in the High Court of Justice by the head of the West Bank council of Bil'in against the route of the separation barrier, which claims that land was illegally taken from the villagers. The newspaper also reported that Tene, a settlement located some 3 km north of the Green Line, north of Hebron, will be left on the Palestinian side of the barrier after the High Court of Justice on Wednesday rejected its petition to change the route to include it on the "Israeli" side.

Maariv and Israel Radio reported that following talks former PM Ehud Barak held Wednesday and today, he is likely to remain in the Labor Party.

Yediot cited a report secretly put together by the Israeli Institute for Economic and Social Research, which will be presented to Olmert in order to guide the next government. The report allegedly says that the successive Israeli governments have invested USD 63 billion in the West Bank since 1967.

Channel 10-TV and Ha'aretz published the results of a survey conducted Wednesday night by Prof. Camille Fuchs of the Amanet Group's Dialogue Institute, which show that "one month after PM Sharon departed the stage and a week after Hamas's victory in the Palestinian elections, Israelis have not changed their voting intentions". (In brackets: figures from previous poll) -Kadima would get 43 Knesset seats (44); Labor Party 21 (21); Likud 13 (14); Shas 9 (9); Arab parties 8 (10); Meretz 4 (3); National Union 6 (5); United Torah Judaism 6 (5); Yisrael Beiteinu 5 (6); National Religious Party 3 (3).

A Yediot/Mina Zemach (Dahaf Institute) poll conducted on Wednesday found that 57 percent of Israelis blame the settlers for the violence at Amona; 16 percent blame the IDF and police; 10 percent believe that both sides are equally responsible; 17 percent are undecided.

Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "A look at the future shows the evacuation from Amona arousing hope and even creating an obligation that Israel will indeed continue the process of taking leave of all of [the] territories."

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The Israeli

public ... has already announced in the polls that for its part, Israel can talk to Hamas. After the usual delay, the politicians will also follow suit."

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker wrote in Yediot Aharonot's editorial: "As long as [Hamas's] charter remains valid ... any financial aid to and international recognition of this movement will result in ... devastation."

Columnist Daniel Doron, Director of the Israel Center for Social and Economic Progress, an independent pro-market, public policy think tank, wrote in conservative, independent The Jerusalem Post: "Only Hamas's deadly determination to act on its convictions may wake us up to reality, a little late, as usual. It may be a reality drenched, unnecessarily, in lots of blood."

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page one of Yediot Aharonot: "The [Israeli] people are gradually splitting into two: 'them' and 'us.'"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "This disengagement, of one people into two tribes, is already here. It must be stopped now."

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Amona supporters and their leaders seem to have been engaged in a dangerous form of brinkmanship."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "A normal public opinion will [not] tolerate abominable acts of evil perpetrated against true pioneers."

Block Quotes:

I. Order in the Wild West"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (February 2): "A look at the recent past shows that the evacuation [of the illegal settler outpost of Amona on Wednesday] permanently marks the importance of the disengagement from the Gaza Strip as a historic event that generates change, that began Israel's separation from the occupied territories. A look at the future shows the evacuation from Amona arousing hope and even creating an obligation that Israel will indeed continue the process of taking leave of all of these territories. Regardless of the question of whether there is or isn't, will be or won't be, a Palestinian dialogue partner -- and regardless of the justified yearning for peace in the Middle East, or at least for a final-status agreement -- Israel must define its borders for itself, crystallize its sovereignty and strengthen its democracy. No future agreement with law-breakers can be consistent with this trend."

II. "There Is Someone Not To Talk To"

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (February 2): "'We will not talk to Hamas,' was the united, wall-to-wall reaction of the Israeli government and its spokespersons after the Islamic movement won the Palestinian parliamentary elections.... Which is fine, until one small question arises: what exactly will we refrain from talking to it about? And how exactly will it look, this non-talk? According to the Palestinian constitution, negotiations with Israel are in the hands of PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. True, a government and parliament controlled by Hamas could pose many difficulties, and perhaps even cause Abu Mazen to throw up his hands in despair and resign. But if we are already not talking about borders, the right of return, Jerusalem and the other issues on the agenda, we will not talk with Abu Mazen nor with Ismail Haniyeh. On second thought, we have been not talking to Abu Mazen for over a year, and we will continue not talking to him at least until May or June, when a new Israeli government is formed. But now we will have an excuse: it is not the good Abbas with whom we are refraining from talking, it is the bad [Hamas leader Ismail] Haniyeh.... We will talk with Hamas, or with the officials subject to it -- or else there will be a disaster in the territories, under our responsibility. And we will talk to the Palestinians if we want to and they want to -- no matter what name they go by. The Israeli public, which understands this despite the smokescreen of cliches that the politicians hurl at it, has already announced in the polls that for its part, Israel can talk to Hamas. After the usual delay, the politicians will also follow suit."

III. "Khomeini and Castro in the State of Hamas"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker wrote in Yediot Aharonot's editorial (February 2): " Hamas's ideology is well known to the Palestinian public. Hamas's Islamic Charter was written by the movement's leadership in August 1988, has been published countless times, and is quoted frequently by the media and in Palestinian discourse. It calls for the establishment of an Islamic state like Khomeini's Iran.... As to foreign investors, the religious zealotry (a la Ayatollah Khomeini) and the reactionary socialism (a la Fidel Castro) of Hamas will send them running from the Palestinian Authority. And justly so; the economic performances of the Islamic regimes (in Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia) are negative and destructive in every possible sense. On top of that is the fear of renewed terrorism.... As long as that charter remains valid and constitutes, in its current form, Hamas's principal founding document, any financial aid to and international recognition of this movement will result in three-fold devastation: of the Palestinian economy, of any chance for dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and of the first buds of liberal democracy in the Middle East."

IV. " Hamas and Economics "

Columnist Daniel Doron, Director of the Israel Center for Social and Economic Progress, an independent pro-market, public policy think tank, wrote in conservative, independent The Jerusalem Post (February 2): " Now that we have helped cause a Hamas victory by our failure to fight it effectively and by the stupid hardships we imposed instead on the total population, especially by increasing its economic misery, we can only pray that past Oslo conceits that posited that a terrorist organization would be willing to grant Israel peace will not be reinvented. Chances are, however, that they will. Our politicians will choose procrastination and ' negotiations ' rather than fight Hamas effectively (namely in one fell swoop and not in dribs and drabs) before it consolidates its power. Only Hamas's deadly determination to act on its convictions may wake us up to reality, a little late, as usual. It may be a reality drenched, unnecessarily, in lots of blood."

V. " Them and Us "

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page one of Yediot Aharonot (February 2): " The [Israeli] people are gradually splitting into two: ' them ' and ' us. ' The cracks between the extremist streams among the settlers and their supporters, and the large Jewish public within the Green Line, have long since yawned. After disengagement, the cracks became rifts, and swept more moderate circles along with them. On Wednesday it was already a giant gulf, one that it is doubtful whether it can be bridged. This is a gulf that expresses a lack of faith in the ability to continue to live together, to build a common life together. Some of these people there, beyond the wall, are no longer with us. This state -- with its rules, its symbols and its messengers -- is foreign to them. Mentally, they have already founded the ' State of Judea ' for themselves."

VI. " Two Tribes "

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (February 2): " The ' golem ' that rose against its maker on Wednesday in Amona was born on the ruins of Gush Katif. There were no winners or losers on Wednesday.... The passions that burst out on Wednesday on the rooftops were bottled up half a year ago. On the face of it, everyone played the game well. But this was a dangerous game.... When the dust from the bulldozers settled, when the blood from the wounds clotted, when the hose water dried up, we remained with the fractures. On Wednesday in Amona, these fractures were very far from one another. This disengagement, of one people into two tribes, is already here. It must be stopped now."

VII. " Descent Into Violence "

The Jerusalem Post editorialized (February 2): " Amona supporters and their leaders seem to have been engaged in a dangerous form of brinkmanship. Not content with nonviolent protest, they attempted to calibrate the level of violence.... Such a descent into violence should be a source of shame and deep concern to us all. The scenes of security forces charging the crowd on horses and swinging batons are difficult to accept, particularly in contrast with the seeming gentler approach employed during the evacuation of Gush Katif. But the use of force by Israeli citizens against Israeli security personnel is unacceptable. In a

democracy, the government retains, and must always retain, a monopoly on the use of force."

VIII. "The Settlers' Lives Aren't Worth Anything"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (February 2): "The lives of the settlers from Judea, Samaria, and Gaza [i.e. the territories] were jeopardized.... The police and their overseers would err if they thought that a normal public opinion will tolerate abominable acts of evil perpetrated against true pioneers.... [But] those who petition the High Court of Justice to obtain relief of their concerns should not complain when the court, which is well known for being the leftists' foremost inspiration, doesn't rule according to their wishes. Those who resort to the High Court of Justice must obey its orders."

JONES